

Byss and the Deep Core

Planet Hoppers: April 2005

By Rodney Thompson (with special thanks to Dan Wallace)

Welcome to "Planet Hoppers," where we bring you a set of articles on a particular world in the *Star Wars* Roleplaying Game galaxy that a Gamemaster can use separately, as a linked series of events, or as a springboard for all-new adventures. This time around, we look at Byss and other planets of the Deep Core.

While Coruscant and all of the Core Worlds are considered the centers of galactic civilization, they are not the true physical center of the galaxy. This honor is reserved for the region known as the Deep Core, a highly dangerous and thoroughly mysterious cluster of stars and planets. Due to natural hazards, the Deep Core remains almost as unexplored as the Unknown Regions, and despite expansion into the area during Palpatine's reign, only a few habitable planets have been settled or support indigenous life.

The Deep Core is practically a maze when it comes to hyperspace navigation. Traveling to many places in the Deep Core is incredibly difficult because of the dense clusters of stars and black holes in the region. Where stellar bodies are far apart, as with the rest of the galaxy, plotting a hyperspace course is merely a matter of adjusting to bypass gravity wells. But in the Deep Core, even a slight miscalculation or incorrect assumption means certain death and destruction from a hyperspace mishap. In the days of the Old Republic, famous hyperlane scouts plotted new safe passages into and out of the Deep Core, but for the most part, the region still remained uncharted.

This all changed with the rise of the Empire. Palpatine, sensing the need to expand his power inward as well as outward, commissioned exploratory missions in the Deep Core that discovered many new worlds and routes. For all the horrible atrocities committed by the Emperor and his minions, the Empire used its resources and drove ahead with unprecedented expansion into the Deep Core through sheer force of will. As new routes opened up new sectors in the Deep Core, the Empire established a number of colonies and drew wealthy and loyal nobles to these worlds with the promise of power, money, and control. The program was a success, and almost overnight, the Empire had a solid and fiercely loyal grip on the Deep Core.

When the Empire crumbled, the Deep Core became the regrouping point for much of the Imperial effort. The faithful servants of the Empire continued to preserve the Imperial lifestyle in the Deep Core, and even into the height of the New Republic, the region was considered as stalwart in their support of Imperial ideals as the Imperial Remnant itself. Warlords and rogue leaders of the Empire regrouped for further strikes at the New Republic from the Deep Core, centered around the shadowy world of Byss.

It was not until almost 25 years after the death of Emperor Palpatine that the New Republic became aware of the true complexity of the Empire's hold on the Deep Core. Thanks to negotiations between Grand Admiral Gilad Pellaeon and Leia Organa Solo, the New Republic finally gained access to the hyperspace routes in an effort to stymie the further expansion of the Yuuzhan Vong invasion. Since the war with the Yuuzhan Vong devastated the New Republic, the Jedi and other freedom fighters began using the impassable nature of the Deep Core to stage traps and hide from the seemingly unstoppable invaders.

Hyperspace Security Net

The Deep Core Security Zone is the name for hyperspace lanes in the Deep Core that are strictly monitored for traffic by the Empire. Passing through these hyperspace lanes is no easy task; to legitimately do so requires not only proper registration with the Bureau of Ships and Services as an authorized Deep Core traveler, but also Imperial Security Authorization and Imperial Intelligence Clearance. This ensures that only those ships the Empire wants to pass through the Security Zone do so. To circumvent the Security Zone means traveling uncharted hyperspace lanes into the Deep Core; this adds +10 to the DC of any Astrogation checks involving destinations within the Deep Core.

A combination of several technologies at the cutting edge of Imperial research helps enforce the Security Zone. *Immobilizer*-class Interdictor Cruisers block the narrow hyperspace lanes, while mines that generate gravity wells upon detecting hyperspace activity in their zone litter the broader areas of space that such ships cannot cover. Once a ship has been pulled from hyperspace by either method, it must present proper authorization or come under immediate and devastating fire from Star Destroyers and their support craft. This combination of

Interdictor Cruisers and gravity mines is known as the Hyperspace Security Net, trapping any attempts to pass through the Deep Core Security Zone via known hyperspace routes.

Part 1: Byss

In which we learn the dark secrets of the Emperor's so-called luxury planet.

Part 2: Empress Teta

In which we navigate the urban sprawl of the region's hub of galactic civilization.

Part 3: Prakith

In which we tread lightly through the foreboding mountains of this fortress world.

Part 4: Vulpter

In which we see how the Trade Federation and the Empire created a dying wasteland.

Part 1: Byss

By Rodney Thompson (with special thanks to Dan Wallace)

Planet Type: Terrestrial
Climate: Temperate
Terrain: Lakes, plateaus
Atmosphere: Breathable
Gravity: Standard
Diameter: 21,600 km
Length of Day: 31 standard hours
Length of Year: 207 standard days
Sentient Species: Humans
Languages: Basic
Population: 19.7 billion
Species Mix: 98% Human, 2% other
Government: Dark side theocracy
Major Exports: None
Major Imports: High technology, processed foods, weapons
System/Star: Beshqek System

Planets	Type	Moons
Chel	Barren rock	0
Abanol	Toxic rock	1
Polos	Toxic rock	1
Relus	Terrestrial	1
Byss	Terrestrial	5
Kissarm	Gas giant	9
Houll	Frozen rock	5
Pelutt	Frozen rock	2

Description

The mysterious planet Byss lies at the heart of the Imperial holdings in the Deep Core. A pleasant resort world used by Emperor Palpatine as a personal retreat, Byss was once a lush and fertile planet that was used as a lure to attract willing followers to settle in the Core. Over time, the Emperor's dark side energies slowly corrupted the world and transformed it into one of the most powerful dark side sites in the entire galaxy. An eerie blue-green sunlight bathes everything on the planet in an unusual glow, contributing to the overwhelming strangeness of the world. The planet itself is something of a myth, built up to pique the curiosity of those who have heard of a mysterious paradise planet ruled by the Empire. With tranquil scenery, low geological activity, exceedingly mild seasons, and the feel of a luxury resort, the surface of the planet appears to be the perfect place to live, which is exactly what Palpatine wants its inhabitants to believe.

Approaching Byss from space makes it abundantly clear that this is the true stronghold of the Emperor. An entire sector fleet is spread throughout the Beshqek system, with a ring of Star Destroyers encircling the planet itself. A web of sensor arrays known as the Gauntlet Scanners crisscrosses the entire world, continually monitoring IFF transponders, security codes, and other forms of authorization for anyone showing even the slightest signs of forged documentation. The Star Destroyers in orbit have standing orders to open fire immediately on anyone identified by the Gauntlet Scanners with full and lethal force. The Byss Security Zone, as the space around the planet is known, is completely off-limits to anyone not authorized by the Empire in advance. A METOSP (Message To Spacers) makes it clear to any travelers entering the system that the Empire tolerates absolutely no trespassing in the area surrounding the dark world.

History

When the Empire forged boldly into the Deep Core under Emperor Palpatine's decree, the Emperor quickly chose the planet Byss as his personal resort world. When the Imperial claim to the Deep Core was established and loyal followers flocked to the new frontier, Palpatine made sure to draw the most eager and blissfully ignorant nobles and leaders to Byss. Once the populace had settled into their new lives in an Imperial utopia, the Emperor initiated his true plans for the world. Slowly but steadily, he used his dark Force powers to enslave the people on the world and drain their life energies to fuel his own vile experiments.

The Emperor's death brought little respite to the people of Byss. Within months, the Emperor inhabited his clone body and began the rebuilding process. For years, Palpatine simply focused on building up his own power and preparing to strike at the New Republic. The shipyards of Byss worked day and night producing massive battlestations such as the Galaxy Gun and vast warships like the *Eclipse*-class and Sovereign-class Star Destroyers. Around the planet Byss, a marshaling of military forces took place unlike any previously seen in the history of the galaxy. The renewed war against the New Republic was short but devastating.

Several deaths and reincarnations later, the Emperor and Byss were finally defeated. Using the planet-destroying weapon known as the Galaxy Gun, the Emperor struck out against the forces of the New Republic again and again. Seizing control of the *Eclipse II*, the Emperor's flagship, the New Republic forces -- led by the heroic actions of the droid R2-D2 -- sent the massive capital ship crashing into the superweapon. The resulting explosion devastated not only the remnants of the Imperial fleet in the Beshqek system but also resulted in the collapse of the planet itself. After years of serving as the dark heart of the Empire, the planet Byss became little more than a cloud of rubble.



People

Almost mindless under the oppression of the Emperor's dark side influence, the people of Byss find their life energies constantly leached off during the Emperor's evil machinations. The Emperor encouraged the spread of rumors that Byss is a paradise worthy of only the most loyal servants, but the truth is that the Empire whisked its inhabitants away to the Deep Core world after being personally selected as the most useful to the Emperor's plans. While most of the inhabitants live their lives in almost a dreamlike state on the seeming utopia, with even their communications to families on other worlds censored to maintain the mystery of the planet, many others have been brought to the world to carry out the Emperor's wishes. Servants of the Imperial war machine toil until exhaustion building starships and droids, while bureaucrats and businessmen ensure that the financial aspects of the Empire continue to cover production costs. There is almost no one on the entire planet whose life doesn't revolve around making the Empire function in some manner.

Many Core noble families have a presence on Byss. Remaining close to the Emperor at all times is one of the few ways to curry favor and keep informed about Imperial decrees, so a few brave and foolhardy nobles risk living on the dark world each year. However, nobles tend to be a little stronger willed than other inhabitants of Byss and are merely cowed rather than brainwashed. Of course, a heavy military presence is felt everywhere on Byss; no street corner is without a stormtrooper, no landing pad without a TIE Fighter, and no public place without at least a few ISB agents keeping an eye out for potential traitors.

Locations

Descriptions of several key locations follow.

The Emperor's Citadel

Also known as the Imperial Citadel, this complex houses the personal quarters and offices of Emperor Palpatine. Contained within the Citadel are the Emperor's throne room, a vast cloning complex, dark side alchemical laboratories, libraries of dark side tomes, and other facilities that are part of the Emperor's sinister plans. Deep within the citadel, the Emperor performs grisly experiments on all forms of life, including sentient beings, in order to expand his knowledge of the dark side; it was in the citadel that the Emperor crafted his Imperial Sovereign Protectors and the Chrysalide rancors. In the bowels of the citadel are a number of chambers where the Emperor trains his dark side Adepts and a select few Inquisitors and delves deep into the secrets of Jedi and Sith holocrons. The Emperor also used his personal throne room during his plot to seduce Luke Skywalker to the dark side, and kept the tanks holding his own clone bodies close at hand in order to make it that much easier to resurrect himself.

Gauntlet Scanner Stations

Several Golan III defense platforms that serve as coordinators for all the space traffic around the world float throughout the field of scanner satellites around Byss. These space platforms are in place not only for orbital defense (providing support fire equal in volume to some capital ships) but also as a place where Human officers can oversee the daily operation of the Byss Security Zone. Each station houses a number of TIE Fighter squadrons and defensive forces to add to the fray if any naval force is ever foolhardy enough to try and attack the planet, as well as control systems for allowing starships to land on or depart from the surface of the world. These stations are one of the few points of vulnerability in the Byss Security Zone, though it would take a highly trained force with no fear of death (or worse) in order to capture one. As has been proven before, the Emperor has no remorse about ordering the armada to blast a compromised station out of existence.

Imperial Freight Complex

The Imperial Freight complex is the likely one of the most heavily guarded spaceports in the entire galaxy. Serving as the primary spaceport of the planet Byss, the freight complex is where independent starships and Deep Core Haulers offload their cargoes and take on exports. Additionally, all civilian traffic not directed toward a private residence goes through this freight complex for security purposes.

The complex is a massive structure that resembles the major spaceports of the galaxy. In addition to docking, refueling, and repair bays, there are several levels of restaurants, clubs, and cantinas designed to give weary spacers a place to cool their heels without venturing too far out into the surrounding city. The freight complex is also the only place you're likely to find beings not affiliated with the Empire directly, and a place where more than a few smugglers and outlaws can pause while on Byss. Every tramp freighter pilot, bounty hunter, and spacer must also have some form of Imperial clearance, whether it comes in the form of standing independent shipping contracts or Deep Core Security Zone authorization. The Imperial Freight Complex is a towering structure capable of accommodating thousands of freighters and some larger starships and is one of the only places on Byss that resembles any of the rest of the galaxy.

The *Eclipse*

In construction for almost as long as either Death Star, the *Eclipse* is a massive capital ship orbiting the planet Byss. Almost unimaginable in length and unparalleled in firepower, the *Eclipse* is the largest Star Destroyer ever built, dwarfing the Super Star Destroyers and bearing within its arsenal a superlaser capable of cracking the crust of most planets. The interior of the *Eclipse* resembles the interior of a Star Destroyer, but also contains docking bays and repair facilities like those found on space platforms. An orbital battlestation in its own right, meetings between the Grand Admirals and other important business of the Imperial Navy take place in one of the many war rooms aboard the massive capital ship. The *Eclipse* is a permanent fixture in the skies above Byss, an imposing visage and display of the Imperial Navy's might.

New Starship: Hunter-Killer Probot

The Arakyd Viper probot is a relatively common sight throughout the Empire, but the hunter-killer probot seems more like something out of a warped nightmare than an evolved probot design. Arakyd took the outer appearance of a probot and expanded it to the size of a capital ship, then completely redesigned the interior to function as a starship capture and detainment platform capable of patrolling the skies above Byss for extended periods of time. Hunter-killer probots feature a number of tractor beam projectors that drag wayward starships into one of its many docking bays where they are held until an Imperial officer in charge of the probot can determine the appropriate course of action. Internally, the hunter-killer probot is completely autonomous and houses no living crew members.

Hunter-Killer Probot

Craft: Arakyd Viper-HK
Size: Large (150 m tall)
Crew: 1 (droid intelligence)
Hyperdrive: None
Initiative: +3 (-1 size, +4 crew)
Passengers: 0
Maneuver: +3 (-1 size, +4 crew)
Cargo Capacity: 200 metric tons
Defense: 19 (-1 size, +10 armor)
Consumables: None
Shield Points: 100 (DR 40)

Cost: Not available for sale
Hull Points: 400 (DR 40)
Maximum Speed in Space: Cruising (3 squares/action)
Atmospheric Speed: 300 (5 squares/action)

Weapon: Ion Cannon (2); Fire Arc: Any; Attack Bonus: +7 (-1 size, +4 crew, +4 fire control); Damage: 4d10x2; Range Modifiers: PB -2, S/M +0, L N/A.

Weapon: Quad Blaster Cannon (2); Fire Arc: Any; Attack Bonus: +3 (-1 size, +4 crew); Damage: 4d10x2; Range Modifiers: PB -2, S +0, M/L N/A.

Weapon: Tractor Beam Projector (1); Fire Arc: Any; Attack Bonus: +11 (-1 size, +4 crew, +8 fire control); Damage: Special; Range Modifiers: PB -6, S -4, M/L N/A.

New Starship: Shadow Droid

In the waning days of the Empire, when it became difficult to have expendable starfighter squadrons patrolling the planet Byss each day, the reborn Emperor Palpatine turned to a design originated by Umak Leth for pilotless starfighters. Though other craft of this nature had been used in the past, the shadow droid was a cybernetic starfighter boasting a weapons payload heretofore unseen in automated attack craft. Additionally, due to the unreliable nature of normal droid starfighters that lacked the creative thinking and on-the-fly tactics of a normal fighter pilot, shadow droids were directed by the biologically-maintained brains of dead TIE pilots that had been twisted by the Emperor's dark side alchemy to obey unquestioningly.

Shadow Droid

Craft: Imperial Shadow Droid
Size: Diminutive (6m length) Crew: 1 (Skilled +4)
Hyperdrive: None Initiative: +8 (+4 size, +4 crew)
Passengers: 0 Maneuver: +10 (+4 size, +4 crew, +2 engines)
Cargo Capacity: None Defense: 24 (+4 size, +10 armor)
Consumables: None Shield Points: 60 (DR 10)
Cost: Not available for sale Hull Points: 100 (DR 10)
Maximum Speed in Space: Ramming (9 squares/action)
Atmospheric Speed: 1150 (19 squares/action)

Weapon: Ion Cannon (1); Fire Arc: Front; Attack Bonus: +14 (+4 size, +4 crew, +4 fire control, +2 engines); Damage: 4d10x2; Range Modifiers: PB -2, S/M +0, L N/A.

Weapon: Concussion Missile Launcher (1); Fire Arc: Front; Attack Bonus: +10 (+4 size, +4 crew, +2 engines); Damage: 8d10x2; Range Modifiers: PB +0, S/M/L N/A.

Weapon: Laser Cannon (2); Fire Arc: Front; Attack Bonus: +14 (+4 size, +4 crew, +4 fire control, +2 engines); Damage: 4d10x2; Range Modifiers: PB +0, S -2, M/L N/A.

Weapon: Proton Torpedo Launcher (1); Fire Arc: Front; Attack Bonus: +14 (+4 size, +4 crew, +4 fire control, +2 engines); Damage: 9d10x2; Range Modifiers: PB +0, S/M/L N/A.

Weapon: Repeating Blaster Cannon (1); Fire Arc: Front; Attack Bonus: +10 (+4 size, +4 crew, +2 engines); Damage: 6d10x2; Range Modifiers: PB -2, S +0, M/L N/A.

Adventures

The adventures described in this section are meant for GMs only. If you're a player, stop reading now!

Lost Among the Converted

A wealthy noble family from Alderaan contacts the party with a desperate plea for help. Their daughter was lured to the planet Byss by the Emperor's offers of wealth and luxury for his loyal servants that relocated to the Deep Core. Her family is not willing to give her up to the Emperor so easily and offers the party 15,000 credits to go to the planet and rescue her. The noble house will provide BoSS registrations and Imperial clearance to get them onto the world, but locating the young noblewoman is another problem altogether. It seems that she has become

the newest apprentice of one of the Emperor's Dark Side Adepts, Savuud Thimram. The party has a chance to apprehend the noblewoman as she travels to the Imperial Citadel each morning for her lessons in the dark side, but must contend not only with the forces of the Empire but also her blossoming Force abilities.

Escape from New Order

While spending time on the planet Byss, the party finds themselves the victim of some exceptionally bad luck. Their ship is confiscated and their security clearance is revoked, causing them to become fugitives of the law on one of the most heavily controlled worlds in the entire Empire. Fortunately for the party, a special pleasure cruise has arrived at Byss to allow a number of new servants of the Empire to disembark and join the throngs of citizens living on the Deep Core world. The party may choose to infiltrate the ship's crew and flee the planet, but not before a meeting with Commander Varen Medis, an Imperial agent determined to ensure that no troublesome criminals escape the Empire's justice. Convincing the rest of the pleasure ship's crew is one thing, but bluffing past an inspection by a devoted Imperial officer is quite another.

Allies and Antagonists

The characters described in this section are meant for GMs only. If you're a player, stop reading now!

Savuud Thimram

A trusted student of Emperor Palpatine, Savuud Thimram is one of the resident Dark Side Adepts that work in the Imperial Citadel. Thimram sees that the Emperor's orders are carried out quickly and efficiently, and is feared and obeyed by all the servants of the Empire. While not as influential as even the Inquisitors, Savuud Thimram has learned to manipulate the dark powers to get what he wants. The son of a wealthy noble family on Chandrila, Thimram was whisked away to Byss by the Emperor once he sensed the Force potential in the young man. Over the years, Palpatine warped his student with the powers and teachings of the dark side, and the end result is a loyal and sinister adept who acts on behalf of his dark master whenever called upon.

Savuud Thimram: Male Human Force Adept 5/Dark Side Devotee 7; Init +0; Defense 19 (+9 Class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 67/10; Atk +4/-1 melee (2d8, force pike) or +8/+3 melee (1d3, punch) or +8/+3 ranged (by weapon); SQ Dark Side Talisman +2, Force weapon +1d8+1d4; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +13; SZ M; FP 3; DSP 6; Rep +4; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 17, Wis 14, Cha 14.

Equipment: Dark side talisman, force pike, robes.

Skills: Bluff +6, Disguise +5, Gather Information +6, Hide +7, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (Dark Side Lore) +11, Listen +5, Move Silently +6, Read/Write Basic, Read/Write Sith, Search +7, Sense Motive +8, Speak Basic, Speak Sith, Spot +6, Survival +4.

Force Skills: Affect Mind +8, Drain Energy +8, Drain Knowledge +8, Empathy +6, Enhance Ability +4, Enhance Senses +8, Farseeing +7, Fear +10, Force Grip +6, Force Lightning +6, Force Stealth +5, Force Strike +6, Illusion +13, Move Object +9, See Force +9, Telepathy +7.

Feats: Force-Sensitive, Iron Will, Skill Emphasis (Drain Energy, Fear, Illusion), Stealthy, Weapons Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, primitive weapons, simple weapons).

Force Feats: Alter, Aware, Control, Dissipate Energy, Force Whirlwind, Mind Trick, Rage, Sense.

Dana "Deke" Galvason

A brash tramp freighter captain from Bakura, Dana Galvason is one of the lucky (or unlucky) members of the Fringe with clearance to travel through the Deep Core Security Zone. Though the lucrative Imperial contracts pay well and keep her on the right side of the law, Galvason's rebellious streak also ensures that she's running from the Empire almost as much as she works for it. No lover of the Empire, Galvason is not above smuggling in Rebel agents as long as her role in their infiltration remains a secret. Having heard the whispers that the Emperor's servants can draw information from the minds of prisoners, Galvason requires significant compensation for taking such risks, though the Alliance gladly pays her what she asks for in order to make use of her legitimate access to the Emperor's throneworld. Galvason is a grinning, devil-may-care woman with strange tribal-looking tattoos under her eyes and across the bridge of her nose, and she pilots a modified YT-2000 transport known as the *Bakuran Blade*.

Dana Galvason: Female Human Scoundrel 6; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Defense 16 (+2 Dex, +4 Class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 29/13; Atk +5 melee (1d3+1, punch) or +6 or +2/+2 ranged (3d8, heavy blaster pistol) or +6 ranged (3d4, hold-out blaster); SQ Illicit barter, Lucky (2/day), Precise Attack +1; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +4; SZ M; FP 1; Rep +1; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Equipment: Comlink, datapad, heavy blaster pistol, hold-out blaster, YT-2000 transport.

Skills: Appraise +4, Astrogate +7, Bluff +8, Computer Use +6, Disguise +5, Escape Artist +5, Forgery +6, Gamble +4, Gather Information +8, Hide +5, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Deep Core) +8, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Pilot +11, Profession (tramp freighter captain) +5, Read/Write Basic, Repair +6, Sleight of Hand +4, Speak Basic, Spot +3.

Feats: Gearhead, Headstrong, Heroic Surge, Skill Emphasis (Pilot), Spacer, Starship Operation (space transport), Weapons Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Part 2: Empress Teta

By Rodney Thompson (with special thanks to Dan Wallace)

Planet Type: Terrestrial
Climate: Temperate to arctic
Terrain: Plains, forests, mountains, urban
Atmosphere: Breathable
Gravity: Standard
Diameter: 15,700 km
Length of Day: 23.5 standard hours
Length of Year: 359 standard days
Sentient Species: Humans
Languages: Basic
Population: 1.3 billion
Species Mix: 71% Human, 29% other
Government: Monarchy
Major Exports: Carbonite
Major Imports: Raw materials, consumer goods, processed foods
System/Star: Empress Teta/Koros

Planets	Type	Moons
Keres I	Searing rock	0
Gillad	Terrestrial	1
Mozos	Terrestrial	2
Empress Teta	Terrestrial	3
Tryast	Terrestrial	1
Phiris	Terrestrial	2
Phoros	Terrestrial	1
Ronika	Terrestrial	1
Keres II	Frozen Rock	0

Description

Originally known as Koros, the planet called Empress Teta is the hub of galactic civilization within the Deep Core. Though many of the planets scattered throughout the Deep Core have highly urbanized areas, Empress Teta is one of the few planets to continue to provide cutting edge fashion and amenities only a step behind Coruscant itself. Empress Teta features beautiful and historical architecture dating back to the days of reconstruction following the wars with the Sith and is one of the most visually stunning city-planets in the entire galaxy.

Though some areas full of wildlife still exist on Empress Teta, the majority of the world is taken up by its urban sprawl, which has grown from the one-time capital city of Cinnagar to encompass much of the planet's main continents. In fact, the city is so large that some citizens of the galaxy continue to call the entire planet by this name, leading to some confusion over the years. The planet itself is wealthy and prosperous, with ornate buildings and an artistic style that makes walking through the city a visual treat. Empress Teta is also one of the few worlds in the Deep Core to remain relatively multicultural despite Imperial influences and the anti-alien bias brought with them.

History

For eons, one of the only true passages into the core was a route known as the Koros Trunk Line (also called the Carbonite Pipeline), which travels from the planet Koros past Kuar and to the planets Foerost, Kaikielius, and then Coruscant. As such, with its vast carbonite resources and placement on the only major route into the Deep Core, Koros became the single largest outpost in the Deep Core frontier and sprang up almost overnight as a bustling city-planet. For years, Koros was the primary stop in the Deep Core, though hyperspace scouts from the Hyperspace Navigators Guild, which has its primary offices on Empress Teta, tried to open up new routes through the densely-packed stars. When the Great Hyperspace War between the Old Republic and the Sith Empire erupted, Koros was caught in the middle and became one of the first planets to see major combat.

After Koros suffered from many devastating attacks, the benevolent leader Empress Teta eventually rebuilt the

world in the wake of the war and unified the planet with a myriad of other worlds into what eventually was named the Empress Teta system. The name of Koros was officially changed to Empress Teta, and the planet served as the capital of a small Deep Core empire. With the carbonite mines raking in the credits and unparalleled wealth for all the planet's inhabitants, Empress Teta became a shining example of peace and prosperity that many worlds of the Deep Core tried to emulate.

The only blemish on this was the emergence of the Krath, a group of evil sorcerers that wreaked havoc on the system. A group of petulant young nobles used ancient dark side tomes to enhance their own Force powers and gave rise to one of the most dangerous threats the planet had ever seen. Though they were eventually defeated, many still whisper that the Krath tradition is carried on in secret societies consisting of elite nobles across the planet and in other parts of the galaxy.

During the time of the Old Republic, Empress Teta expanded its power and influence and eventually grew to be one of the most highly populated worlds in the region. Off-world entrepreneurs flocked to the planet during the "Carbonite Rush," when members of the Mining Guild were coming up with so much carbonite that they could not find enough freighters to ship the valuable material. Empress Teta managed to avoid heavy casualties during the Clone Wars, though its close ties with the Mining Guild, whose loyalties to the Confederacy were forged in credits, ensured that the planet did not escape the conflict completely unscathed. A number of smaller struggles over the valuable carbonite took place on the ground and in the space above Empress Teta, though its own defense forces were enough to ensure that the planet was never in severe danger.

When the Empire rose, it claimed the planet and seized all carbonite mines. Empress Teta became a staging point for most of the Imperial expeditions into the Deep Core, and the Navigator's Guild's computers were plundered for information by Imperial Intelligence. It was not until the Empire fled the system years after the Emperor's rebirth that the people regained their sovereignty and rejoined the galaxy as a rich and economically stable world.



People

When not under the boot heels of Imperial occupation, the people of Empress Teta are proud of their heritage as self-sufficient entrepreneurs and daring leaders of the galaxy. With their home planet nestled in such a dangerous region of space, Tetans are likely to be at the very least straightforward and energetic while, at the most extreme, they can be brash, hotheaded, and fiercely passionate about what they believe in. Their pride in their history, as well as the planet's namesake, leads many Tetans to remain on their home planet rather than venture out into the galaxy at large.

Han Solo, encased in carbonite

Many Tetans work for the Mining Guild, whose presence on Empress Teta has been a constant ever since the discovery of rich carbonite deposits eons ago. Similarly, daring scouts and adventurers flock to the world to join the Navigator's Guild as hyperlane explorers seeking to find new ways to get to places throughout the Deep Core. Similarly, a number of shipping and trading businesses make their homes on Empress Teta, providing a large number of jobs in the transport and trade industry.

Locations

Descriptions of several key locations follow.

Cinnagar

The capital city of Empress Teta and one of the largest individual cities in the entire Deep Core, Cinnagar is a place where the inhabitants of the Deep Core can go to experience the sights, sounds, and other amenities found on planets of the Core Worlds. In fact, a number of shops and restaurants directly emulate the styles of individual core worlds -- the Alderaan Fine Arts Museum features new art displays, Coruscant Fashions allows patrons to shop for the latest Core World styles, and Club Corellia offers a number of specialty foods and drinks, as well as dancing and entertainment, from Corellia and other planets of the Core. Similarly, the regional government has offices spread throughout the city, collecting most of the bureaucracy in one place to make the government work more quickly and efficiently. Cinnagar is also home to the planetary defense starfighter corps responsible for patrolling the airspace above Cinnagar and for providing escorts for ships traveling from the planet to the prison colony of Ronika and back. Due to the fact that Cinnagar covers over half of the planet's land mass, the world itself has in all ages been called Cinnagar by many, even in official documentation.

Navigator's Guildhouse

A massive structure filled with antique designs and old galaxy charm, the Hyperspace Navigator's Guildhouse began as a mansion inherited by a wealthy Tetan noble that was transformed into the base for the guild of explorers attempting to open new hyperspace lanes. Over time, the guildhouse expanded to be a sprawling complex composed of a number of buildings, including hangar bays and starship repair yards. Members of the guild will find temporary housing in the complex, as well as places to park their scout ships for repairs. Despite the modernization of the center, the original wooden guildhouse remains a vision of the past that has slowly been upgraded over time with state-of-the-art computer and communications systems. The navigational library is filled to the edge with star charts and hyperspace routes, and the guildhouse's computers are highly valued sources of information for Deep Core travelers.

Carbonite Mines

The source of Empress Teta's wealth, carbonite mines litter much of the remaining natural landmass of the world. However, the discovery of carbonite deposits on the other six habitable worlds in the system gave the Mining Guild an ample supply of raw carbonite ore to work with and allowed the capital planet itself to avoid the ecosystem plundering that other worlds must endure. Mining Guild security teams closely monitor the carbonite mines on Empress Teta for tampering and trespassing, though common rumors on the street indicate that a number of organized crime syndicates have been using the carbonite mines as a place to store and transfer contraband under the guise of legitimate business.

New Starship: Tetan Interceptor

The planetary defense starfighter of the Empress Teta system, the Tetan Interceptor (originally known as the Koros Interceptor) is a capable ship born of necessity. In the wilder days of the Old Republic, particularly during the years of the Great Hyperspace War, planetary defense craft had to be able to outlast any threat posed to the world they guarded. This concept, combined with the strong military philosophy of Empress Teta herself, gave birth to a heavily armed starfighter that was unique in its relative strength.

The Tetan Interceptor boasts a four-wing design, with two larger wings pointing down while a pair of smaller wings was raised up slightly to the rear. The cockpit of the craft is flanked by a pair of "pincers" that house sophisticated communications and sensor equipment. The ship has four laser cannons, one on each wingtip, and a single ion cannon jutting from the nose of the vessel. Primarily used for local defense, few of these ships had hyperdrives of their own, though several TransGalMeg hyperdrive booster rings were modified to accommodate the oddly-shaped starfighter.

Tetan Interceptor

Craft: Koros Spaceworks Interceptor Size: Tiny (14.2 m length) Crew: 2 (Skilled +4) Hyperdrive: None Initiative: +6 (+4 crew, +2 size) Passengers: 0 Maneuver: +6 (+2 size, +4 crew) Cargo Capacity: 50 kilograms Defense: 22 (+2 size, +10 armor) Consumables: 3 days Shield Points: 0 Cost: 56,000 credits Hull Points: 80 (DR 10) Maximum Speed in Space: Attack (6 squares/action) Atmospheric Speed: 800 (13 squares/action)

Weapon: Ion Cannon (1); Fire Arc: Front; Attack Bonus: +10 (+2 size, +4 crew, +4 fire control); Damage: Special; Range Modifiers: PB -2, S/M +0, L N/A.

Weapon: Laser Cannon (4); Fire Arc: Front; Attack Bonus: +10 (+2 size, +4 crew, +4 fire control); Damage: 4d10x2; Range Modifiers: PB +0, S -2, M/L N/A.

Adventures

The adventure hooks described in this section are meant for GMs only. If you're a player, stop reading now!

Navigator's Guild Glory

Though the scouts that travel Wild Space and the Unknown Regions are the most common, Deep Core scouts still are among the most daring and most reckless. After a starship emerges from hyperspace in the skies above Empress Teta undergoing massive engine failure, a burst transmission to the Navigator's Guild sends the coordinates of a new hyperspace route to a planet listed as having massive deposits of valuable gems, ores, and other natural resources. However, before the captain of the vessel can be questioned, the ship explodes and the mystery of how he came into possession of the route remains unsolved.

The Navigator's Guild puts forth the following offer: any brave explorers willing to make the run on the new route and safely return with more information on the planet will be entitled to a share of ownership of the new world. This prompts a space race of unseen proportions, with every available scout ship in the Deep Core dashing to find out who can be the first to make it to the planet and back without falling prey to whatever destroyed the first navigator's ship.

Blockade Runners of Koros

Imperial occupation has not been kind to the formerly free enterprise on Empress Teta, encouraging smuggling rings and blockade runners to try to brave the Empire's space forces despite the Deep Core Security Zone. As a result, a popular smuggling run (known among spacers as the Carbonite Run) travels from Empress Teta past Primus Goluud (through part of the hyperspace lane formerly known as the Daragon Trail) and then to the planet Vulpter. The party is offered a considerable sum of credits by the Rebel Alliance to smuggle some much-needed weapons from Empress Teta to a contact on Vulpter. The catch is that the Rebels have a spy in their midst, and the Empire is waiting on Empress Teta to spring a trap. The party faces either blasting their way through the Empire's blockade or being tried as traitors for aiding the Rebels, with a hefty number of credits at the end of one choice and execution at the end of the other.

Allies and Antagonists

The characters described in this section are meant for GMs only. If you're a player, stop reading now!

Sebban Keto

A descendant of the same family that produced Satal Keto, one of the Tetan nobles that founded and led the Krath uprising millennia ago, Sebban Keto is a young businessman whose house owns a number of trendy shops and restaurants in the Core District of Cinnagar. Beneath the surface, however, lies a more sinister being. Sebban Keto is a student of the dark side of the Force and heir to the Krath tradition who preys on the greed and jealousy fostered by his business dealings and superficial stores. Sebban Keto corrupted a small number of other nobles and even sponsored a Krath cult on a remote Core World, and he currently acts as the ringleader of the Krath tradition on Empress Teta. Sebban is a dark-haired nobleman who, despite graying at the temples, remains a handsome and alluring man who obviously enjoys a life of luxury.

Sebban Keto: Male Human Noble 5/Force Adept 6; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Defense 18 (+1 Dex, +7 Class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 57/10; Atk +7/+2 melee (1d3, punch) or +7/+2 melee (1d4, Knife) or +8/+3 or +4/+4/-1 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol); SQ Bonus class skill (Bluff), Coordinate +1, Favor +2, Force weapon +1d8, Inspire Confidence, Resource Access; SV Fort +4, Ref +7, Will +13; SZ M; FP 2; DSP 5; Rep +5; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 15, Cha 18.

Equipment: Blaster pistol, comlink, datapad, knife, rich clothing.

Skills: Bluff +11, Computer Use +5, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +8, Intimidate +8, Knowledge (Dark Side Lore) +7, Knowledge (nobility) +7, Profession (businessman) +6, Read/Write Basic, Read/Write Sith, Sense Motive +10, Speak Basic, Spot +6.

Force Skills: Affect Mind +10, Drain Knowledge +3, Empathy +4, Enhance Ability +3, Enhance Senses +6, Farseeing +9, Fear +6, Force Stealth +8, Force Strike +4, Heal Self +6, Illusion +10, Move Object +5, See Force +6, Telepathy +6.

Feats: Force-Sensitive, Influence, Iron Will, Sharp-eyed, Skill Emphasis (Farseeing), Stealthy, Weapons Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Force Feats: Alter, Control, Force Mind, Mind Trick, Sense.

Essic Daroom

One of several office workers in the Navigator's Guildhouse, Essic Daroom is a bureaucrat in charge of maintaining the validity of maps kept in the guild databases. Nicknamed "Cartographer" by his coworkers, Daroom is responsible for cataloguing all hyperspace data brought in by explorers and comparing them to existing maps to ensure that nothing has changed that would make the guild's maps obsolete. Daroom is a quiet and fidgety Ithorian who loves walking through the guild's three-dimensional map room, which he boasts is even more detailed than the one in the Jedi Temple on Coruscant.

Essic Daroom: Male Ithorian Expert 3; Init +0; Defense 11 (+1 Class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP -/10; Atk +2 melee (1d3, punch) or +2 ranged (by weapon); SV Fort +1, Ref +1, Will +5; SZ M; FP: 0; Rep: +0; Str 10, Dex 10, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 13, Cha 12.

Equipment: Comlink, datapad.

Skills: Astrogate +13, Computer Use +11, Gather Information +7, Knowledge (Deep Core) +8, Profession (cartographer) +7, Read/Write Basic, Read/Write Ithorese, Repair +6, Search +4, Sense Motive +3, Speak Basic, Speak Ithorese, Spot +3, Survival +7.

Feats: Skill Emphasis (Astrogate, Computer Use), Spacer, Weapons Group Proficiency (simple weapons).

Part 3: Prakith

By Rodney Thompson (with special thanks to Dan Wallace)

Planet Type: Terrestrial
Climate: Temperate to arctic
Terrain: Mountains, plateaus
Atmosphere: Breathable
Gravity: Standard
Diameter: 17,400 km
Length of Day: 27.6 standard hours
Length of Year: 335 standard days
Sentient Species: Humans
Languages: Basic
Population: 3.6 billion
Species Mix: 98% Human, 2% other
Government: Dictatorship
Major Exports: Raw materials
Major Imports: Consumer goods, processed foods
System/Star: Prakith/Prak



Planets	Type	Moons
Rake	Barren rock	0
Mekith	Toxic rock	1
Prakith	Terrestrial	2
Delanoth	Gas giant	8
Prakess	Frozen rock	2

Description

Prakith is truly one of the foremost fortress worlds under Imperial control. Aside from the considerable military might stationed on and around the world, Prakith is composed primarily of mountainous continents and deep, unpredictable oceans. The natural landscape, a result of the world's ancient tectonic activity, lends itself well to easily defensible outposts and regions that are nearly impervious to ground assault. With mountains and plateaus dominating the landscape and very few open fields for battle, Prakith is among the most difficult worlds to seize by force.

The major cities on the planet sprang up on the vast plateaus surrounded on all sides by great caverns and crevasses. Since the hazardous terrain makes ground travel difficult, residents of Prakith are more inclined to own cloud cars and high-altitude airspeeders, reserving repulsorlift vehicles dependant on smooth terrain for intra-city travel. Most of Prakith's cities seem to be carved out of the sides of mountains, featuring architecture that embraces jagged lines and bold, towering skyscrapers. Much like the terrain of the planet itself, Prakith's cities are mazes of sharp peaks and deep plunges, adding to the intimidating feeling visitors get on approach to the planet.

History

Eons before Prakith's discovery by Imperial scout teams, the world was a violent and fragile place of intense volcanic activity. The planet's molten core was frighteningly unstable, causing the continents drifting on its crust to slam into one another with such force that landmasses compressed and jutting mountains popped up as far as the eye could see. When the planet core cooled to more habitable levels, tectonic activity resumed normal terrestrial levels. As a result, flat land on Prakith is almost unheard of, and majestic, rugged mountain ranges stretch to the horizon from almost any vantage point.

Imperial survey teams discovered Prakith during early expeditions into the Deep Core. Due to its relative proximity to the Core Worlds, the Empire colonized and built up Prakith as one of the first of the Deep Core planets to be "civilized." As more Imperial citizens flocked to Prakith, the planet earned its reputation as one of the "fortress worlds," so named because they were almost as heavily defended as the capital city-planet of Coruscant. More than just a fortress world, however, the Emperor also selected Prakith to be the home office of the Inquisitorius in the Deep Core region. With the dark power of the Inquisitors tainting the world and the heavy fortifications put in place by the Empire, Prakith became a foreboding planet where all treaded lightly.

When news of the crumbling of the Empire reached the fortress worlds, Prakith was one of the first planets to support a continued war with the Rebel Alliance. Already in possession of a sizeable planetary defense fleet, Moff Foga Brill embraced the reborn Emperor's campaign of terror against the New Republic and contributed all of his own resources. When the Emperor was once again slain and Byss destroyed, Prakith was declared the capital planet of Brill's holdings as a warlord and lasted many years as an independent military colony until it was captured by and integrated into the New Republic.

People

Unsurprisingly, the people of Prakith are a relatively subdued and businesslike populace. With the heavy-handed influence of the Empire (and the looming threat of inquisition) constantly felt across the world, few citizens can afford to be anything but cowed. The order imposed by the Empire shows itself in the relative safety and security felt on Prakith -- the crime rate is low, and anti-Imperial insurgents are almost nonexistent. The people of Prakith live in relative peace and limited prosperity providing that they do not express any dissenting political views.

Military personnel are commonplace in all the cities on Prakith. With a heavy Naval presence above the world, crews of orbiting starships looking for a little downtime fill most of the cantinas and nightclubs on the planet's surface. The Mining Guild has a strong presence on Prakith as well, and a large portion of the planet's laborers are employees of the Guild in one form or another. The mineral-rich mountains across the world brought a great number of job opportunities to the people of Prakith and, for the most part, they embraced the Mining Guild's presence. As is common on the other fortress worlds of the Empire, the nonhuman population is almost unseen except as slaves or prisoners.

Few fell for the Emperor's promises of prosperity and power in the Deep Core as thoroughly as Foga Brill. A former Director of Investigation for the Republic Judicial Department, Brill embraced the order imposed by the Empire after years of chasing the lawless across the galaxy. Given the title of Moff by the Empire, Foga Brill worked day and night to ensure the peace and prosperity of the Empire found its way onto Prakith. A lean, calculating man with graying hair, Moff Brill made sure that the Imperial Navy presence at Prakith was always strong enough to repel an invasion by almost any force. When Brill declared himself a warlord following the collapse of the Empire, his demand for a strong naval presence paid off, and it was not until many years and battles of attrition later that the New Republic was able to oust the warlord from power.

Locations

Descriptions of several key locations follow.

Asonel Cave System

The Asonel cave system is a massive underground spiderweb of natural and artificial tunnels that rests deep within the mountain ranges near Prak City. Miners discovered the cave system in the early days of colonization and they are speculated to be the result of ancient lava flows during days when the planet core was still cooling. When miners first arrived in the cave system, they could pick up gemstones forged by intense heat right off the ground. Later, deep-mining expeditions used the tunnels as a starting point but eventually abandoned the caves following a number of worker accidents. In modern times, the Asonel cave system is a haven for criminals on the run and rebellious agents in hiding. Periodically, stormtrooper regiments flush out the caves and round up any suspected criminals for questioning.

Citadel Inquisitorius

Few structures in the galaxy can inspire as much fear and awe as the Citadel Inquisitorius. A towering black spire that juts menacingly from a position nestled in the mountains, the Citadel is the central base of operations for much of the Inquisitorium. It is here that the High Inquisitors are given assignments and come to confer with others of their order, and is one of the most dangerous and foreboding buildings ever encountered. The interior resembles many of the religious structures found in different parts of the galaxy, with high, vaulted ceilings and row upon row of obsidian columns. Housed within the dark structure are a number of torture chambers and detention blocks that the Inquisitors use to detain and interrogate the most dangerous and strong-willed prisoners. Many citizens on Prakith whisper that the screams of Jedi captured and brought to the citadel echo across the mountains for days at a time, a chilling warning to all that hear it.

Prak City

The seat of Foga Brill's power on Prakith, Prak City is composed of towering skyscrapers with pointed tops that

cause the city to resemble the lower half of a dangerous, toothy maw. The city itself is not only the capital of the planet but the headquarters of almost all major companies on the world. Constructed on the largest available plateau found on Prakith, the city features a large spaceport capable of supporting a single Victory-class Star Destroyer and any number of other civilian and military vessels. Constant patrols of stormtroopers sweep the city looking for trouble at all times, and the suspicion of the Inquisitors has crept down through the ruling hierarchy to the point where the city's population lives in constant fear of secret police.

Adventures

The adventure hooks described in this section are meant for GMs only. If you're a player, stop reading now!

Behind Enemy Lines

Rebel agent Andren Biel was stationed on Prakith to monitor troop movements in the Deep Core. Several weeks ago, transmissions from Biel stopped, and the Alliance sends the party to find out what happened to him.

Biel hid in the Asonel caves for the past two weeks, avoiding Imperial patrols after his cover was blown by the secret police of Prak City. The party should be able to discover the caves after asking around the planet, but when they find Biel, it's not long before Imperial scout troopers on speeder bikes zoom into the caves in hot pursuit. A high-speed chase through the depths of the planet ensues, with the outcome determining whether or not the Alliance learns of an ambush planned by the Imperial Navy.

Jedi Business

A Jedi from Master Skywalker's New Jedi Order has gone missing on a reconnaissance mission to the Deep Core. Tracking the Jedi's movements to the fortress world of Prakith, the party infiltrates the world and gains access to the Citadel Inquisitorius, where remnants of the Empire's Inquisitors are slowly turning the Jedi to the dark side. As the party will quickly discover, breaking into the Citadel proves no easy task when their targets are aided by the dark side of the Force. When the party arrives, they are greeted by Inquisitor Shynne, who has a special plan for them: force the Jedi to fight against the party as a final act to push the Jedi over to the dark side.

Allies and Antagonists

The characters described in this section are meant for GMs only. If you're a player, stop reading now!

Inquisitor Shynne

One of the most devout among all the Inquisitors, Inquisitor Shynne is a hard woman with dark features and an angular face that gives her body an appearance of sharpness. Trained in the powers of the dark side by the Inquisitors on Prakith, Shynne chose the Deep Core itself as her jurisdiction in order to remain close to the Citadel Inquisitorius, where she was raised. Brutally effective with a cruel taste for pitting allies against one another, Inquisitor Shynne is noted for using the thick presence of the dark side in the Deep Core to root out traitors in the very heart of the Empire.

Inquisitor Shynne: Female Human Jedi Consular 6/Imperial Inquisitor 6; Init +3 (+3 Dex); Defense 22 (+3 Dex, +9 Class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 79/12; Atk +14/+9 melee* (4d8+1, crit 19–20, lightsaber) or +10/+5 melee (1d3+1, punch) or +12/+7 ranged (by weapon); SQ Authority, Deflect (Attack -4, Defense +3, Extend Defense and Attack), Favored Enemy +2 (Jedi Guardian), Increase Lightsaber damage +2d8, Resource Access, Tainted; SV Fort +11, Ref +9, Will +14; SZ M; FP 2; DSP 7; Rep +4; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 15, Cha 13.

Equipment: Comlink, lightsaber*, robes.

** Inquisitor Shynne has constructed her own lightsaber.*

Skills: Bluff +5, Computer Use +2, Gather Information +6, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (Empire) +2, Read/Write Basic, Sense Motive +8, Speak Basic.

Force Skills: Affect Mind +10, Battlemind +4, Drain Knowledge +6, Empathy +6, Enhance Ability +7, Fear +12, Force Defense +3, Force Grip +5, Force Stealth +5, Force Strike +3, Heal Self +9, Move Object +8, See Force +6, Telepathy +10.

Feats: Exotic Weapon Proficiency (lightsaber), Force-Sensitive, Iron Will, Sharp-eyed, Track, Weapon Finesse (lightsaber), Weapon Focus (lightsaber), Weapons Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Force Feats: Alter, Attuned, Burst of Speed, Control, Dissipate Energy, Lightsaber Defense, Sense.

Andren Biel

Andren Biel is, in many ways, a typical Rebel spy. A native of Coruscant, Biel spent many years studying drama and acting at a variety of schools in the Core Worlds and has learned to put forth a certain face when needed. After stowing away aboard a smuggling vessel in order to see the rest of the galaxy, Biel found that he not only had a taste for adventure but also was appalled at the way the Empire functioned outside of Coruscant. Biel was assigned by the Rebel Alliance to monitor naval movements in the Deep Core, as only an Imperial citizen and talented deceiver could survive long so far into the heart of the Empire.

Andren Biel: Male Human Noble 2/Scoundrel 4; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Defense 16 (+2 Dex, +4 Class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 26/10; Atk +5 melee (1d3+1, punch) or +6 ranged (3d4, hold-out blaster); SQ Bonus class skill (Bluff), Favor +1, Illicit barter, Inspire Confidence, Lucky (1/day), Precise Attack +1; SV Fort +1, Ref +8, Will +5; SZ M; FP 1; Rep +0; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Equipment: Comlink, datapad, disguise kit, hold-out blaster, security kit.

Skills: Bluff +16, Computer Use +3, Diplomacy +8, Disguise +15, Entertain (acting) +10, Gather Information +10, Knowledge (Empire) +8, Listen +4, Move Silently +6, Read/Write Basic, Search +4, Sense Motive +4, Speak Basic, Spot +7.

Feats: Heroic Surge, Low Profile, Persuasive, Skill Emphasis (Bluff, Disguise), Weapons Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

New Creature: Cliff Hawk

The cliff hawk is an avian predator that lives in the mountains of Prakith. With feathers colored to look like the mottled grays and browns of rocky outcroppings, the cliff hawk is a stealthy hunter that tends to walk slowly on its two legs rather than fly when stalking prey. The cliff hawk has a number of sharp, hooked talons that allow the bird to cling to walls and ceilings before leaping on its target undetected.

Cliff Hawk: Mountain Predator 3; Init +2 (+2 Dex); Defense 14 (+2 Dex, +2 Size); Spd 20 m (fly), 5 m (walk); VP/WP -5; Atk +6 melee (1d3+1, claw) or +6 melee (1d4+1, bite) or +7 ranged; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +1; SZ T; Face/Reach 1 m by 1 m/1 m; Str 12, Dex 14, Con 10, Int 6, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills: Climb +9, Hide +14, Jump +5.

Feats: Flyby Attack, Track.

Other Locales

The four Deep Core worlds detailed in this "Planet Hoppers" series are those most suitable for exploration by a gaming group, but they're not the only planets in the region. Here are brief summaries of four more locations that a Gamemaster can develop further if the heroes wish to explore the Deep Core in more detail.

Ebaq 9

Part of the Final Redoubt operation, Ebaq 9 is a moon above the planet Ebaq scouted by the Empire but never settled. Verdant jungles and vast plains cover the world, and the planet remains wild and undeveloped despite its existence in Imperial records for many decades. Additionally, Ebaq 9 is unique in that it is completely inaccessible except through a single hyperspace route, meaning that for starships, there is only one way to get to the planet and one way to get off the planet.

Originally used by the Deep Core Mining Corporation to establish bronzium refineries, Ebaq 9 has only sparse wildlife and remnants of civilization in the form of abandoned outposts. With the information about the planet gathered from the Empire, the Galactic Alliance was able to use Ebaq as a trap for the Yuuzhan Vong. Luring the arrogant Yuuzhan Vong commanders to the world, the Alliance jumped in behind their fleet and acted as the hammer that smashed the invaders against the anvil of Ebaq 9.

Eclipse

Built on a planet deep inside a massive asteroid, the Eclipse base was used by the Jedi and compliant members of the New Republic as a hidden base from which strikes were launched against the Yuuzhan Vong. Though the Eclipse base was eventually abandoned and destroyed, for a time it served as a hideout for the Jedi -- much as planets like Hoth and Yavin had for the Rebel Alliance. Eclipse also boasted a number of advanced science laboratories where research was performed that eventually resulted in the devices that were able to jam the psychic emanations of the alien Yammosk.

Khomm

Home to the Khommite species, Khomm is a strictly regimented and organized world whose cities are laid out in a grid pattern and whose other infrastructure is meticulously planned generations in advance. The Khommites long ago reached what they consider to be perfection and froze their society in place thanks to cloning. By replicating themselves genetically and assigning each individual a set role in society, Khomm almost never changes from one generation to the next.

Khomm is home to massive cloning facilities that are the source of the Khommite legacy. Additionally, the cities on the planet Khomm are all exactly alike, featuring identical buildings and streets designed for maximum efficiency. Khommites have a great disdain for anything that breaks their ordered society and are reluctant to make changes without a massive bureaucratic process.

Tsoss Beacon

Originally built by droids and suicide workers on a barren lump of rock, Tsoss Beacon is an abandoned space station first used as a safe haven and refuge for travelers moving throughout the Deep Core. Though it would later be used by the Empire as a regrouping and planning point for a renewed effort against the fledgling New Republic, Tsoss Beacon saw traffic only rarely, and it appeared only on the most exacting star charts, such as those kept by the Navigator's Guild.

Part 4: Vulpter

By Rodney Thompson (with special thanks to Dan Wallace)

Planet Type: Terrestrial
Climate: Temperate to arctic
Terrain: Barren rock, urban
Atmosphere: Breathable (polluted)
Gravity: Standard
Diameter: 14,900 km
Length of Day: 22.5 standard hours
Length of Year: 391 standard days
Sentient Species: Vulptereen
Languages: Basic, Vulpterish
Population: 421 million
Species Mix: 88% Vulptereen, 6% Amaran, 2% Human, 2% Neimoidian, 2% other
Government: Corporate
Major Exports: Vehicles and starships
Major Imports: Consumer goods, high technology, processed foods
System/Star: Vulpter

Planets	Type	Moons
Vulpus	Searing rock	0
Kins	Toxic rock	1
Vulpter	Terrestrial	0
Nur	Barren rock	1
Vulp Minor	Frozen rock	3
Vulp Major	Gas giant	9

Description

Vulpter is a highly industrialized world that can only be called a tragedy of callousness. Originally covered with rolling hills, grasslands, forests, and all manner of other environments, the natural inhabitants of Vulpter reduced the world to a smog-choked wasteland where only the brave (or suicidal) dare tread. The Vulptereens still call it home, though, and cling to their planet despite the ravages of industry and technology. Massive factories belching out black smoke and industrial waste pits cover the planet's surface, honeycombed with underground warrens and cluttered with ghost towns and dying settlements.

Vulpter is a dumping ground for low-grade goods that the Trade Federation couldn't pawn off on other systems. A ring of debris composed of floating advertisements and discarded promotional material clutters Vulpter's orbit. For every thriving city on the planet's surface, five other cities are abandoned, in disrepair, or collapsing entirely. The planet is a junkyard, with the surface lacking natural wildlife and the natives constantly plagued by diseases and ailments resulting from impurities in the air, water, and food supplies. The people of Vulpter cannot even provide enough food to sustain themselves and must import what they can't scrounge on their own.

History

The planet Vulpter began simply as the homeworld for a native sentient species. As the Vulptereens advanced technologically and socially, the planet became more industrialized and soon joined the galactic community. When the Trade Federation first consolidated its resources into a single organization, the Vulptereens were among the founding members and finally felt a part of an important galactic venture. This euphoria was short-lived, however, as the greedy and ruthless Neimoidians quickly made it apparent that they considered Vulpter an inferior world and seized control of the planet and its production facilities. Almost before they realized what had happened, the inhabitants of Vulpter were under the control of Trade Federation bureaucrats who drove their world into the poverty-stricken and devastated state for which it came to be recognized.

When the Empire replaced the Republic and the Trade Federation lost control of Vulpter, the inhabitants found themselves in a much worse position. The Empire, with its anti-alien bias in full effect, saw no need to continue shipping foodstuffs to the ruined world. The Empire simply cut the planet off from the rest of the galaxy when they closed off the Deep Core to hyperspace travelers and let it rot. Millions of Vulptereens lost their lives in the ensuing famines, and thousands more in the riots that resulted from a starving population. Since the planet had

no strategic or resource value to the Empire, the world and its dying populace was of little consequence to Imperial agents. It is for this reason that Rebel agents started using the planet as a safe haven in the Deep Core, and when ways were found around the Hyperspace Security Net, it became a major port of call for Alliance ships attempting to strike Coreward. In exchange for foodstuffs and supplies, the people of Vulpter allowed the Rebellion use of their world until the Empire fell.

When the New Republic came into power, Vulpter once again became a part of the galaxy at large. With the Trade Federation influence gone and the Empire no longer blockading the planet, the Vulptereens set about rebuilding their planet as a viable manufacturing world. With help from the same ecosystem purification teams responsible for cleaning up the atmosphere of planets like Duro, Vulpter has slowly begun to make a recovery from the devastation brought on it by centuries under Trade Federation dominance.

People

The Vulptereens are as poor a people as can be found in the galaxy. Most members of the planet's populace work for the Trade Federation, operating massive underground drilling machines that carve out tunnels used for waste storage. Those not directly under the thumb of the Trade Federation live in the crumbling aboveground cities, producing the few airspeeders and other vehicles for which the planet is known. Whether toiling away in underground caverns or cranking out locally designed repulsorcraft, the people of Vulpter are constantly inundated with inferior products and cast-off merchandise.

The tragedy of the Vulptereens is that they have simply been exploited into poverty. To the Trade Federation (and subsequently the Empire), Vulpter is so insignificant that it can be (and occasionally is) omitted entirely from maps and hyperspace travel charts. The inferiority of Vulpter gives its exploiters no reason to feel remorse for the hardships inflicted on the people of the world, and as a result, the Vulptereens simply have careless decision after careless decision thrust upon them by their corporate masters.



Famous Vulptereen Podracer Dud Bolt

Locations

Descriptions of several key locations follow.

Orbital Advertisement Ring

A marvel of corporate thinking, the orbital advertisement ring induces a reaction of both awe and horror in those who encounter it. Massive, revolving billboards several kilometers in length and width form a ring around the planet that clutters the sky with such effectiveness that sunlight cannot penetrate its swirling mass. Coupled with a dense field of debris scattered throughout the neon monstrosities, the orbital advertisement ring generates such massive shadows that entire crops have been wiped out as they pass overhead. From the ground, when a being on Vulpter looks up to the night sky, all he can see from one horizon to the next are blinking billboards hawking cut-rate products, silent tombstones for the impoverished populace below.

Any attempts to travel through the orbital advertisement ring in a starship adds +5 to the DC of Pilot checks for maneuvers or stunts while in the debris field.

Underground Storage Tunnels

Comparable to warrens carved out by subterranean vermin, the storage tunnels are massive caverns created for dumping excess products. When the Vulptereen crews carve out a tunnel and complete its support structures, the inhabitants use the tunnel to store excess dry goods until shipping them off to other worlds. The work in these tunnels is hard and pays little, but as employees of the Trade Federation, the workers have no choice but to continue the intense labor in order to support themselves and their families. Many Vulptereen laborers live in side tunnels away from the storage tunnels rather than commute to and from the surface each day. Additionally, the managers of these storage burrows are all Amaran, and tensions between the Vulptereen workers and the Amaran managers are almost palpable.

Benoga

Benoga is one of the largest of the abandoned cities on the surface of Vulpter. Once a heavily populated city supporting industrial complexes and corporate offices, Benoga quickly fell into disrepair when the Trade Federation decided to close the manufacturing plants and relocate the company headquarters offworld. Within a few years, the city was deserted -- except for the occasional drifter or pack of vermin. Buildings, apartment complexes, factories, recreational facilities, and mass transit systems were left standing in the city, giving the occasional visitor the sense that the entire populace simply vanished overnight. Of course, some structures have fallen into disrepair and have been corroded by acid rain and other pollutants, but for the most part, Benoga is a city without inhabitants.

New Vehicle: Driller Machine

The driller machine is a Trade Federation vehicle designed to carve out the burrows used to store dry goods beneath the surface of Vulpter. Each vehicle looks like a massive drill bit some 21 meters in diameter attached to a treaded cab. Since the drill bit blocks any sort of view the crew might have of where they're drilling, each driller machine boasts a compliment of drivers, sensor operators, mechanics, engineers, and navigational experts to ensure that the machine doesn't accidentally plow into another tunnel or breach a pocket of underground magma.

Driller Machine

Class: Wheeled [Ground]	Crew: 4 (Normal +2)
Size: Huge (12.6 m long)	Initiative: +0 (–2 size, +2 crew)
Passengers: 4	Maneuver: +0 (–2 size, +2 crew)
Cargo Capacity: 200 kg	Defense: 13 (–2 size, +5 armor)
Speed: 20 m (10 m burrowing)	Shield Points: 0
Max Velocity: 60 km/h	Hull Points: 60 (DR 5)
Cost: Not Available for Sale	

Weapons: None.

Adventures

The adventure hooks described in this section are meant for GMs only. If you're a player, stop reading now!

Racing in the Rings

The Vulpter Orbital is an annual race held by the Vulptereen population to bring some diversion into their otherwise rough lives. Each year, contestants race through the orbital advertisement field until one racer crosses the finish line or all other racers are eliminated.

This year, one of the contestants in the race is a Rebel contact by the name of Lon Wert. Unfortunately, Wert has found himself greatly in debt to a local crimelord who wants to ensure that Wert doesn't survive the race as a message to others who think they can avoid paying what they owe. The Alliance, however, doesn't want to see their contact harmed and sends the party to Vulpter with a dual mission. Not only must the heroes ensure that Wert survives the race and eliminate any of the crimelord's thugs who try to sabotage his efforts, but they must also place a significant wager on Wert's victory and ensure that it comes to pass in order to pay off the Vulptereen's debt in full.

Ghosts in the Darkness

The abandoned cities on Vulpter hold more than pests and cobwebs; they make excellent hiding places for criminals, smugglers, and other fringe elements of society. A short time ago, noted Black Sun terrorist Harper Krass fled to the ruined world to escape justice and set up his own operation there. Unfortunately for him, the Republic Judicial Department (or Imperial Intelligence or the New Republic, depending on the adventure's era of play) was tipped off to the fact that he is hiding in one such abandoned city by the Trade Federation, who wish to have Krass captured before he can harm their operations there. Complicating matters are rumors of ghosts lurking in the abandoned cities, and some say that Krass has already fallen under the spell of their dark powers. The party must investigate the deserted ruin and bring Krass to justice, ghosts or no ghosts.

Allies and Antagonists

The characters described in this section are meant for GMs only. If you're a player, stop reading now!

Lon Wert

Among the most talented pilots on all of Vulpter, Lon Wert is a young and impulsive Vulptereen male with a penchant for bragging. Known not only for his daredevil flying skills but also for his unique understanding of the way vehicles work, Wert has earned a name for himself as the most talented racer since Dud Bolt. Unfortunately, Wert's arrogance has led him to run up debts through gambling. Lon Wert is also a Rebel sympathizer who wants to see the Empire overthrown so his people can once again build livelihoods for themselves. Wert dreams of joining the Rebel Alliance as a fighter pilot, but he remains on Vulpter to help support the war effort there.

Lon Wert: Male Vulptereen Tech Specialist 7; Init +7 (+3 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 19 (+3 Dex, +5 Class, +1 Size); Spd 8 m; VP/WP 38/13; Atk +9 or +5/+5 ranged (3d6, blaster pistol) or +7 melee (1d4+1, bite); SQ Darkvision (20 m), Expert (Craft (starships)), Instant Mastery (Repair), Research, Tech Specialty (Mechanic +1); SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +2; SZ S; FP 1; Rep +2; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 9, Cha 10.

Equipment: Blaster pistol, comlink, pilot's uniform, tool kit.

Skills: Astrogate +4, Computer Use +8, Craft (starships) +6, Gamble +3, Pilot +16, Read/Write Basic, Read/Write Vulptereese, Repair +10, Speak Basic, Speak Vulptereese.

Feats: Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Skill Emphasis (pilot, repair), Starship Operation (starfighter) Weapons Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

Vulptereen Species Statistics

+2 *Dexterity*, -2 *Wisdom*, -2 *Charisma*. Vulptereens make excellent pilots and are good with their hands, but they suffer cultural gaps with the rest of the galaxy due to their isolation.

Small: As Small creatures, Vulptereens gain a +1 size bonus to their Defense, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, and a +4 size bonus on Hide checks, but they must use smaller weapons than Humans use, and their lifting and carrying limits are three-quarters those of Medium-size characters.

Vulptereen base speed is 8 meters.

Vulptereens gain Darkvision at a range of 20 meters.

Bonus Feat: Improved Initiative. Vulptereens are capable of reacting quickly to danger and obstacles thrown in their path.

Bonus Feat: Great Fortitude. Years of living in a polluted environment have made Vulptereens hardier and more able to resist the negative effects of many toxins.

Harper Krass

Talented and ruthless, Harper Krass is a well-known Black Sun agent who has fled to Vulpter for a number of reasons. On Coruscant, Krass used assassinations and other terror tactics to further the Black Sun agenda. Under self-imposed exile to Vulpter, Krass hopes to expand the reach of Black Sun into the Deep Core and sees Vulpter as a good first step. Harper Krass is a slender Human male with jet-black hair and a menacing look. His operations on Vulpter have been discreet but significant, setting up his own fledgling syndicate and preparing to seize control of the Vulpter criminal underground.

Harper Krass: Male Human Scoundrel 7; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Defense 16 (+1 Dex, +5 Class); Spd 10 m; VP/WP 33/13; Atk +6 or +2/+2 ranged (3d8, heavy blaster pistol) or +6 ranged (3d4, hold-out blaster) or +7 melee (1d3+2, punch) or +7 melee (1d4+2, knife); SQ Illicit barter, Lucky (2/day), Precise Attack +1; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +3; SZ M; FP 1; DSP 3; Rep +5; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Equipment: Comlink, datapad, glowrod, heavy blaster pistol, hold-out blaster, liquid cable dispenser, knife.

Skills: Appraise +3, Balance +4, Bluff +9, Computer Use +3, Demolitions +4, Diplomacy +5, Disable Device +4, Disguise +7, Escape Artist +5, Forgery +6, Gamble +5, Gather Information +9, Hide +6, Intimidate +6, Knowledge (underworld) +6, Listen +5, Read/Write Basic, Search +2, Speak Basic, Spot +3.

Feats: Heroic Surge, Improved Initiative, Infamy, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Skill Emphasis (Move Silently), Weapons Group Proficiency (blaster pistols, simple weapons).

New Creature: Garbage Hunter

The garbage hunter proves that almost everything changes with the scale of its surroundings. While waste dumps have always had a problem with rodent infestations, the massive pollution and industrialization of Vulpter has given rise to an urban predator known as the garbage hunter. Roughly 2 meters long and waist high to a Human, the garbage hunter resembles other four-legged rodents but sports a chitinous ridge across its back that stands up another meter from its spine. As a result, a garbage hunter burrowing through waste heaps resembles an ocean predator with its fin protruding from the water, closing in on prey with only the slightest of warnings.

Garbage Hunter: Urban Vermin 7; Init +1 (+1 Dex); Defense 11 (+1 Dex); DR 3; Spd 10 m, burrow 10 m; VP/WP –/13; Atk +7 melee (1d6+2, bite) or +7 melee (1d6+2, claw) or +6 ranged; SQ Darkvision (20m); SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +1; SZ M; Face/Reach 2 m by 2 m/2 m; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 13, Int 6, Wis 8, Cha 4.

Skills: Climb +6, Hide +9, Jump +6, Move Silently +5.

Feats: Blind-fight, Track.